

H.R. 3962 Costs Too Much, Taxes Too Much & Does Nothing to Improve Health Care

U.S. House of Representatives Narrowly Passes Health Care Legislation

WASHINGTON, DC — U.S. Congressman Phil Roe, M.D. (TN-1) issued the following statement regarding H.R. 3962, which narrowly passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 220-215:

I came to Congress to help enact health care reform. As a physician, I've seen first-hand the problems insurance companies created for patients. I've seen first-hand how government programs have made beneficiaries worse consumers of health care. I've seen how the cost of health care has exploded, so much so that many can't afford insurance. I've seen all these problems and I want to fix them.

For months I've gone to the House floor with many of my physician colleagues to talk about the problems with this plan. The TennCare plan tried to provide universal coverage and make health insurance affordable, and in the end it nearly bankrupted the state as the program tripled in cost. It created an incentive for beneficiaries to seek unnecessary care because it cost them nothing. It shifted costs to the private plans, who were forced to make up the underpayments of the government program, increasing everyone's premiums. In the end, 45 percent of those on the public plan previously had private insurance and either dropped their coverage or were dropped by their employer. Incidentally, Governor Bredesen has called this bill on the floor the "mother of all unfunded mandates."

Democrats continued to ignore this evidence. I asked President Obama three separate times since July to sit down and talk about the health care bill and what I know its effects will be, and I have yet to receive a call from the White House. It's one thing to disagree with evidence that undermines the premise of the reform you're pushing, but to not even consider it is unbelievable.

So here we are today with a health care bill that is over two thousand pages. It's loaded up like a Christmas tree of special interest provisions. Sanitation facilities for Indian tribes, biofuel tax credits, nutrition standards for chain restaurants, and references to pizza and doughnuts all made it into this bill, but somehow, Democrats could not come up with a real solution for medical malpractice reform except to try to protect trial lawyers' share of jury awards. Malpractice is proven to cost the health care system billions of dollars every year, but the reforms being proposed make the current system worse.

This bill taxes everyone and everything. It taxes medical devices. It taxes individuals who choose not to purchase insurance, and drives up premiums for individuals who do purchase insurance. It taxes employers who fail to offer health insurance, then taxes them further if they try to increase their employees' wages. It taxes small business owners, who could be creating jobs and getting us out of the recession, and instead forces them to cut jobs or wages.

It taxes health savings accounts, which reduces the use of catastrophic health insurance coverage. It cuts Medicare. Home health care, skilled nursing facilities and Medicare Advantage would all be cut, and seniors with prescription drug coverage will have their premiums increased. Seniors oppose this bill because they get it — their care is going to

be decreased and costs are going up.

After the bill finishes up taxing everything and everyone, it spends all that money even faster. The bill dramatically expands Medicaid, despite the fact that I've never heard of anyone saying they want access to the program. It creates a huge new federal bureaucracy to navigate through. And it funds a government competitor to private insurance companies that will siphon people off of private insurance onto a Medicaid-like program, just like Tennessee did with TennCare.

After the Democrats finish spending \$1.5 trillion, they say the bill is quote unquote deficit neutral. But they ignore that every major government health care expansion before it — Medicare, Medicaid, SCHIP to name a few have cost more than originally estimated. And they completely ignore the fact that they use 10 years of revenue to pay for 7 years of new spending. In the second decade, this program will become an enormous unfunded mandate on state governments, on individuals and on the federal government. Despite the largest deficit in our nation's history, the Democrats are irresponsibly going to make it harder to ever balance the budget.

Here's the bottom line: this bill costs too much. It taxes too much. It does nothing to improve health care, and will result in the majority of Americans left with decreased access, decreased quality and increased costs. It is, as the Wall Street Journal called it, the "worst bill ever" and deserves to be rejected.